

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

## MARCH 2005

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Each month I establish, with input from the Directors, the priority issues on which management and the staff focus. This report summarizes the work that was accomplished during the month as well as other items I feel will give the Council a better understanding of what the staff and I are doing to accomplish our performance objectives.

### **I. Improve the efficiency and accountability of management within the organization**

- Certification Review. FTA and FHWA are expecting to release a draft report regarding the certification review held in January within the next 60 days.
- Classification/Compensation Work. As reported to the Personnel Committee in November 2004, HR staff is continuing work on the classification/compensation system. The Administration Committee requested that staff look into bringing a consultant on board to assist with this work. The classification/compensation work plan will be discussed at the next Personnel Committee Meeting per the Administration Committee's request. Staff is working on scheduling the meeting for March or April.

### **II. Provide support to the Regional Council in providing direction and Leadership to SCAG**

- On February 11th, I met with Dick Steinke, Executive Director, Port of Long Beach and Bruce Seaton, COO, Port of Los Angeles regarding SCAG's Port & Modal Elasticity Study. They indicated that they would participate in the study and an effort to develop an understanding of the financing of the system, but expressed that their preference for financing of goods movement come from custom revenues.
- On February 23rd, I attended the first meeting of the CEQA Improvement Advisory Group Meeting in Sacramento. The goal will be to determine how the statute can be improved so we may more effectively meet our conservation goals and financing needs. The Administration put forth a legislative reform proposal and asked that the Advisory Group to provide comments by March 15th.
- On February 25-26, SCAG participated in the Town Meeting on Community Impacts of Goods Movement and the Ports. The meeting was convened in Long Beach by the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center, which is a partnership of USC and UCLA scientists. The meeting was well attended, including dozens of environmental health scientists, government officials, and hundreds of community and environmental group representatives. I was on a panel that discussed what role health concerns should play in making decisions about expanding the ports, freeways, intermodal facilities, distribution centers, and SCAG's Goods Movement Plan for Action was highlighted in the discussion panel and in meeting workshops. Participants agreed on the need for a comprehensive environmental mitigation strategy that will provide fast and effective reductions of localized impacts from diesel particulate pollution.

### III. SCAG Operations

- Recruitment. Keith Killough is the new Director of Information Services. He will start in March 2005.

There are eight positions in various stages of recruitment. There are two member relations officers, one senior administrative assistant, three assistant/associate planners, one senior planner and one lead planner. Two are new and the remainder are filling existing vacancies.

- Training and Development. The Southern California JPIA, SCAG's insurance provider for both workers' compensation and liability insurance, provided two customer service and two writing classes on site to SCAG employees.

- Budget. The Fiscal Year 2005/2006 Draft Comprehensive Budget was presented to the Regional Council for review in February. This document was created in response to previous requests from the Regional Council for a simplified, overview budget document. It is the first of its kind for SCAG and includes the following budget components: Overall Work Program, General Fund, Cost Recovery, Indirect, and Fringe.

The Final Comprehensive Budget document will be presented for adoption at the March Regional Council meeting.

### IV. Implement Adopted Regional Plans

- Maglev. SCAG is working with SANBAG, City of Ontario, and City of LA to come to an agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding for match contributions toward FRA grant funding for the IOS corridor.

SCAG is arranging a meeting with the Mayor of Ontario, the City of LA, SCAG's President, and SCAG's Maglev Task Force Chair to discuss outstanding issues on the MOU.

SCAG is also trying to arrange a meeting with representatives from the City of Los Angeles Transportation Committee, SCAG's Maglev Task Force Chair, and SCAG's President to further discuss issues on the MOU.

- Regional Comprehensive Plan. The Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force has completed its preliminary deliberations on several issues including housing, land use, homeland security, energy and solid waste. The Task Force has given staff instructions on preparing chapter drafts and reporting to the appropriate policy committees. Staff is conducting additional outreach on some of these topics. Notably, a joint workshop was scheduled with the Building Industry Association on February 25th to generate ideas for the land use and housing action plans. Staff will also schedule a workshop in March to review gaps in the region's current energy policies. The Task Force will hold its next regular meeting on March 28th and will be discussing water and open space.

- COMPASS. We are developing partnerships with three cities that are interested in participating in the Compass Demonstration Projects program. These cities have proposed plans or projects that support the 2004 RTP growth policies for linking land use and transportation. In the coming months, staff will be soliciting applications from all member cities to apply for technical assistance utilizing the COMPASS 2% Strategy tools and resources.

The City of Ontario will be developing several land use scenarios for the development of the agricultural preserve. The South Pasadena project will examine constraints and opportunities presented in the eventual abandonment of the I-710 Corridor right-of-way and sale of over 200 housing structures. The Upland project will focus on requested design assistance and pro forma analysis for site specific parcels in the downtown area. Showcasing these cities, as regional models, serves to promote the local and regional benefits of comprehensive planning within the framework of the Compass principles. Staff will continue seeking out additional local partners for future projects.

SCAG is in negotiations to work in partnership with ULI-Inland Empire Council to coordinate a three-hour Compass Mapping Exercise to be held in the month of March or April 2005.

- Goods Movement Policy Paper. The “Southern California Regional Strategy for Goods Movement: A Plan for Action” was finalized and submitted February 14th to Business, Transportation & Housing Secretary Sunne McPeak. The Secretary’s next follow-up meeting with the principals will be March 24th. Key issues addressed in this policy paper include the urgent need for new infrastructure combined with mitigation of community impacts and development of new financing and project delivery mechanisms. SCAG committees have been briefed on the policy paper, which is available on SCAG’s web site.
- Goods Movement Executive Stakeholder Roundtable. A first step towards implementing the ideas in the policy paper was the Goods Movement Executive Stakeholder Roundtable that SCAG hosted on February 7th. The half-day meeting was attended by about 50 people and included brief public- and private-sector presentations on the issues facing the region. During a facilitated session, the following consensus emerged:
  - Doing nothing is not an acceptable alternative.
  - We must work collectively.
  - We should continue to meet in a single regional forum.
  - Public funding alone will not be sufficient to cover all the needs.

In addition, the shippers, represented by the 100-year-old, Washington, DC-based National Industrial Transportation League, described the performance measures that would motivate them to support and fund regional goods movement projects. Staff are working to develop project information that is responsive to these performance measures. The stakeholders will be reconvened sometime in early summer.

In a related meeting, on February 9th, I and Hasan Ikhata met with Norm King of SANBAG, Wally Baker and Lee Harrington of the LA County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), and LaDonna DiCamillo of Burlington Northern Santa Fe regarding the Goods Movement Policy Paper. All parties will collapse their efforts into one process and will focus the follow-up on four of the deliverable items identified in a Public-Private Partnership Agreement developed by LAEDC.

- Housing. The 5th Annual Regional Housing Summit: Housing Out of the Box will be held on Thursday, April 21st from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Monrovia Community Center, Monrovia, CA. The premise is

that since so many communities, including the State and Federal governments, are financially strapped and cutting back on resources, and with home prices and rents being bid up to astronomical levels, the challenge is to “think outside of the box” for affordable housing solutions. This includes new infill strategies for accommodating growth within existing urban areas and new sustainable development practices in rapidly growing suburban communities. More details will follow. SCAG will be defining our new Compass 2% Strategy and suite of local development planning tools and services, e.g. LA LOTS.

- Forecasting. As directed by CEHD in February, staff is continuing work on the 2007 RTP Growth Forecast Update. Current efforts are focusing on developing 2003 Socio-economic Data (SED), resolving the 2003 base year SED development issues and model input requirements and communicating with the California Employment Development Department (EDD) regarding recently released socioeconomic data.

## **V. Develop Additional Planning Efforts**

- Air Quality. The new federal conformity regulation for 8-hour ozone requires SCAG to receive approval from the US Department of Transportation on SCAG’s conformity determination by June 15, 2005, otherwise the region’s conformity will lapse. SCAG determined the appropriate conformity findings for the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan and the 2004 Regional Transportation Improvement Program and released the Draft 8-Hour Ozone Conformity Finding for a 30-day public review and comment period. The public comment period closed on February 18, 2004. All appropriate comments will be incorporated into the Final 8-Hour Ozone Conformity Finding being presented to the Regional Council at the March RC meeting. After RC approval, staff will forward the conformity package to the federal agencies for their approval.
- On February 14-16, SCAG participated in the National Air Quality Conference, entitled “Quality of Air Means Quality of Life.” The conference was held in San Francisco and included hundreds of participants from a wide range of organizations and counties. Southern California was the focus of many of the presentations, including the keynote address on the Children Health Study, which was presented by Dr. James Gauderman of the USC Keck School of Medicine. Dr. Gauderman mentioned the growing concerns within the health community about localized health risks to communities residing near high volume transportation corridors, especially freeways with high volumes of diesel trucks. Dr. Gauderman expressed an interest in working with SCAG to further explore localized impacts and potential solutions for Southern California.
- Regional Transportation Plan. Uncertainties associated with the fiscal issues raised by staff last month that may warrant early amendment or update of the RTP have not changed. Most of these issues are going to take about a year to fully play out. Deciding whether or not to entertain an amendment or an update at that point would be too late. Therefore, staff is proposing to move forward with the RTP update assuming we may need to accommodate an amendment or an early update before the November 2006 election. In the event that early update becomes unnecessary or irrelevant, we would be in an enviable position of being able to spend more time in further refining the plan for adoption through the regular update schedule. Staff will present the next RTP Update schedule that has a provision for potential amendment or early update to the TCC in March.

- Water Issues. The Water Policy Task Force was briefed on water supply and growth demand issues in the Mojave River Basin. Kirby Brill (General Manager of the Mojave Water Agency), Randy Hill (General Manager of Victor Valley Water District), and Carlos Rodriguez (BIA Staff Member for the Baldy View Chapter) addressed current policies and regional water resources planning for the area. Follow up on these efforts will continue during the year. Also at this meeting, Monrovia Councilmember Mary Ann Lutz was introduced to the Task Force as a new gubernatorial appointment to the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. This appointment of a local government official who has been involved in the SCAG policy process (both EEC and CEHD) will bring needed new thinking and balance to the Board. SCAG's Water Affairs Program Manager, Dan Griset, recently joined the Board of the Metropolitan Water District, representing Santa Ana, the city he served as Mayor and Councilmember between 1979 and 1992.
- Joint SCAG/SANDAG Meeting. On February 24th, I attended a joint meeting of the SANDAG Borders Committee and the SCAG Southwest Compact Task Force, over 20 people were in attendance. With Gary Gallegos, SANDAG Executive Director, I gave a presentation on America 2050: "Third Century" Initiative, which was very well received. The committee members agreed on the need for joint action between our regions and future joint meetings will be scheduled. The agenda also addressed the need for a joint delegation to Congress and the attendees identified additional groups that should be brought in, including the Border Trade Alliance and the Border Counties Coalition. The final agenda item dealt with an inland Maglev proposal. It stimulated considerable discussion and will be brought back for a future agenda.

## **VI. Data**

### **Data/GIS**

- RTIP Database Development. Staff has been working on the development of a new RTIP database in coordination with the County Transportation Commission (CTC) staff. The new RTIP database will be an improvement over the existing system because it will be a single centralized project database that CTC users can access via the web. SCAG staff has completed the user interface prototype for the new RTIP database. This prototype was based on user requirements gathered from both SCAG staff and CTC staff users. This prototype allowed staff to draft an initial design for the RTIP database. SCAG staff is in the process of refining this design.

### **Performance Assessment and Monitoring**

- 2004 State of the Region Report. The State of the Region 2004 Report was released on February 3, 2005 through a press conference at SCAG offices. The release of the Report has received very prominent media coverage. Specifically, the report release has been covered by more than 20 newspapers in addition to 7 TV stations. On February 17, 2005, staff was invited to give a presentation on the State of the Region process and findings at the Western Intergovernmental Audit Forum in San Diego.

## VII. Legislative Program

- Southern California Consensus Program. On February 16th and 17th, I joined President Ron Roberts and TCC Chair Lee Ann Garcia on a two-day advocacy visit to Washington, DC to present the 2005 Southern California Consensus Program to key Congressional delegates and Administration officials. Regional Councilmembers Pam O'Connor, Victor Carrillo, and Art Brown also participated in their respective roles as Board Member of MTA, Board Member of IVAG, and Chair of Metrolink and Vice-Chair of OCTA. Other representatives that attended the trip included Ginger Gherardi, Executive Director of VCTC and Eric Haley, Executive Director of RCTC, Norm King, Executive Director of SANBAG, Councilmember Kelly Chastain, City of Colton, David Solow, CEO of Metrolink, Rick Bacigalupo, Deputy CEO of OCTA, Pam O'Connor, MTA Boardmember, Gary Clark, Executive Officer, MTA, and Steve Palmer and Cliff Madison, MTA lobbyists. We met with House Representatives Joe Baca, Ken Calvert, Christopher Cox, David Dreier's staff, Jerry Lewis, Buck McKeon, and Gary Miller and staff from Senators Boxer and Feinstein's offices, to name a few. It was, in keeping with past advocacy efforts, a very successful visit in which Southern California's reauthorization priorities were coherent and persuasive. Timing for the trip was excellent, as the House takes up the reauthorization the first week of March.
- State Legislature. The bill introduction deadline passed on February 23rd, following a five-day extension in light of computer problems that prevented the completion of introductions by February 18th. In the last wave of new bills, a package of bills to combat sprawl, reduce traffic, maintain open space and farmland, and improve air quality in California was introduced, all of which SCAG is now closely analyzing, including:

SB 832 (Perata/Torlakson/Lowenthal) Incentives for Building Smarter, Preserving Open Spaces, Mitigating Regional Impacts of Local Projects, regarding the development of higher density housing/retail/ office projects in urbanized areas or near traditional central business districts;

SB 575 (Torlakson) Building Affordable Housing;

SB 44 (Kehoe) Air Quality Elements for General Plans, to require local governments to adopt an air quality element or air quality strategies in their general plans to ensure development in the area is undertaken in a manner that reduces air pollution; and

SB 521 (Torlakson)-Encouraging Transit Oriented Development, to allow redevelopment agencies to use tax increment financing to develop high-density projects around or near a transit station.

Bills introduced in the last days of the introduction period now enter a 30-day rest period, which permits legislators to study new proposals before committee hearings begin. SCAG will undertake the same task with the adopted 2005 State and Federal Legislative Program as its guide.

Don Rhodes also met with staff of Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico to pursue his legislation on the Southwest Compact.